What’s hot in IT - An Indian Perspective (Jan-Feb 2019)

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February 2019

Universities, Science & Technology and Policy

- IIT-Delhi announces 500 PhD Fellowships for International students from the academic year 2019-20, a game changer initiative of the Indian higher education system
- Prime Minister dedicates IIT-Dharwad and IIIT-Dharwad to the Nation on February 10, 2019
- German auto components biggie Bosch funds an AI Research Center in IIT Madras with planned investments of Rs 20 Crores on February 6, 2019
- ISRO unveils “Human Space Flight Center” in Bangalore on February 1, 2019; 31st communication satellite GSAT 31 launched from France on February 6, 2019
- Considering the fact that Government’s “Angel Tax” continued to bother start-up community in India, the tax exemption cap was hiked to Rs 25 Crores and the effective time was increased to 10 years, in February 2019
- The new policy on e-Commerce for firms kicks in from February 1, 2019
- TRAI norms for broadcast TV channel pricing comes into effect from February 1, 2019; expected to save money for hundreds of millions of TV consumers
- Union Government presents its Vote on Account on February 1, 2019; acting Finance Minister Piyush Goyal (Finance Minister Arun Jaitley is away in USA on medical grounds) creates history – the first finance minister who is a formally trained accountant (in fact the national topper in his batch) - does a fine balance between fiscal discipline and populism

Products

- MWC 2019 (February 25 - 28) had many products particularly smartphones that “fold” from LG (Dual Screen) and Huawei (Mate X) - in addition to Samsung “Fold” - 5G was the dominant theme
- Samsung launched its revolutionary phone with foldable display Samsung Galaxy Fold on February 20, 2019 at Bill Graham Civic Auditorium in San Francisco, the place where Steve Jobs launched Apple II way back in 1977

Indian IT Companies

- TCS posts good results on January 10, 2019, with the highest-ever quarterly profit Rs 8,105 Crores

MNC IT Companies in India

- In February 2019, French major Thales launches its R & D Center in Bangalore
- Hero Chip Design facility was launched in Bangalore on February 20, 2019
- Samsung R & D Institute signs up for another 4,00,000 sq. ft. space in Bangalore on February 16, 2019
- Amazon & Wal-Mart lose $ 50 Billion in market-capitalization in early February 2019, partly impacted by the Indian e-Commerce rule kicking in on February 1, 2019; Amazon license gets restored on February 6, 2019

People

- Prime Minister Modi receives Seoul Peace Prize on February 23, 2019
- IIT-KGP Alumnus and IIIT faculty Dr Subasis Chaudhury named IIT - Bombay Director; to take charge on April 15, 2019
- February 2019 saw Sriram Raghavan of IBM Research (India) moving to USA to lead AI Research in NYC
• India-educated BITS-Pilani alumnus Ms Revathi Advaiti was named Flex (earlier Flextronics) CEO on February 11, 2019
• CTS CEO Francisco D'Souza steps down after 12 years of glorious innings (CTS revenue saw top-line growing from $ 1.42 Billion in 2006 to $ 16.1 Billion in 2018); settles a long-pending dispute with US Regulator Securities & Exchange Commission for $ 25 Million on February 15, 2019
• Mukesh Ambani (with $ 54 Billion) in global Top 10 in Global Rich list of Hurun (February 27, 2019), for the first time; Bill Gates is No 2 with $ 96 Billion and Bezos of Amazon tops the list with $ 147 Billion. Interestingly, 2470 individuals account for 12% of global GDP, demonstrating the concentration of wealth among the top

Start-up Scene
• Intel acquires Hyderabad-based start-up Ineda – a silicon and platform services provider in the graphics arena for GPU - on February 18, 2019
• India’s hotel room aggregator start-up Oyo enters US market in February 2019
• Swiggy (food delivery company) acquired AI-startup Kint.io on February 4, 2019

Interesting numbers
• India’s IP Index rank moved from 44 to 36 in the year 2018, as per US Department of Commerce Report; the largest jump in the year across all countries
• GST collections in February 2019 sees a marginal drop (Rs 97,247 Crores)
• India’s Central Bank RBI cuts “repo rate” by 25 basis points on February 7, 2019
• Akshaya Patra mid-day meal program among School students in India (run by ISKCON) touches 3 Billion mark on February 11, 2019; starting with 1,500 children in 2000, it crossed the 1 Billion milestone in 2012 and the 2 Billion milestone in 2016
• Government of India increases DA by 3% (from 9% to 12%) effective January 1, 2019 on February 19, 2019
• Tata Motors posts a record loss of Rs 27,000 Crores for the October – December 2018 quarter; the largest ever loss for any Indian company in the corporate history of India!

General
• India’s National War Memorial (built over 2017 to 2019) was launched in New Delhi near India Gate on February 25, 2019
• Indian Railways’ Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai built Vande Bharat Express train commissioned on Delhi – Varanasi route on February 17, 2019; it starts a new era in high-speed train travel in India
• Bangalore Airport commissions its 3.4 MW solar plant on February 6, 2019
• In early February 2019, Airbus decides to stop production of its iconic jumbo aircraft “Airbus 380” from 2021
• US President Trump declares local emergency to press through his demand for billions of dollars for the planned Mexico Wall on February 15, 2019
• A major forest fire destroys 6,000 acres of forest land in Bandipur, Karnataka during February 22 - 26, 2019; 300 cars gutted during Bangalore Aero Show on February 23, 2019
• Terrorists with Pakistan support kill 40 Central Reserve Police personnel in Pulwama in Kashmir on February 14, 2019; India conducts Surgical Strike 2.0 and kill 300 terrorists in a terror camp by flying planes 70 Km into Pakistan territory in a sophisticated and swift 21-minute operation in the wee hours of February 26, 2019; in turn, it leads to loss of Indian Air Force Pilot Abhinandan Varthaman; luckily, Pakistan released him and Abhinandan reaches India back on March 1, 2019 after 60 hours of captivity

January 2019

Universities, Science & Technology and Policy
• JEE Mains 2019 held in January 2019 by National Testing Agency in online mode spread over January 9, 10, 11 & 12; results declared on January 19, 2019 (10 days ahead of time); nearly 10 Lakhs took the exam; one more attempt available for students in April 2019
• Drone Policy 2.0 enters Draft stage and ready for comments on January 15, 2019
• Doordarshan Science channel launched on January 15, 2019 by DST Secretary & S&T Minister
• Micro-satellite “KalamSat” weighing little over 1 Kg (designed by students with guidance from NGO SpaceKidz India) was put in orbit by ISRO on January 24, 2019
• **PhD students’ stipend** amounts increased from Rs 25,000 to Rs 31,000 by Government of India on January 31, 2019
• **AICTE** cuts 40,000 engineering seats and decides not to give permission for new engineering colleges for 2 years, on January 31, 2019
• 600 **Indian students “trapped”** in USA by fake university created by INS in January 2019

**Products**

• **CES 2019 (Jan 7 - 10)** had many products show-cased, but nothing spectacular

**Markets**

• **Byju’s**, Bangalore-based learning solutions company acquires US-based learning games company **Osmo** for $ 20 million on January 16, 2019
• Bangalore-based analytics firm **Fractal** gets $ 200 Million capital infusion from **Apax** on January 16, 2019
• **Bain Capital** acquires majority stake in **Brillio** (Bangalore-based and Santa Clara headquartered) analytics / digital company on January 15, 2019
• **Apple** revises quarterly revenue target downward from $ 89 Billion to $ 84 Billion on January 2, 2019, the first ever in 15 years, and its stock price falls by 7% on the very first day of trading in 2019
• **Indian start-ups** raise $ 38.3 Billion in 2018 (LiveMint January 3, 2019)

**Indian IT Companies**

• **TCS** posts good results on January 10, 2019, with the highest-ever **quarterly profit Rs 8,105 Crores**; its Brand value takes it to global No 3 (next only to Accenture & IBM) as per Brand Finance Report of January 23, 2019; makes 30,000 offers in 2018-19 season (up from 20,000+ last year)
• ** Infosys** posts good quarterly results on January 11, 2019; important, considering the fact that the new CEO **Salli Parekh** just completed a year on January 2, 2019; bags Rs 4,241 Crores Income Tax order on January 16, 2019; its **Verizon** contract value goes up from $ 750 Million to 1 Billion in January 2019
• **Wipro** quarterly (Oct – Dec) profits jump 30%; quarterly revenue crosses $ 2 Billion

**MNC IT Companies in India**

• With 9,100 **patents** in 2018 (with more than 4,000 patents in AI), **IBM** continues its record of holding the No 1 position for 26 years; interestingly, 800 of them were from IBM India, the largest for IBM outside USA
• **Volkswagen** starts India Tech Centre in Pune on January 19, 2019
• **SAP India** to see 400+ **layoffs** (part of 4,400 planned layoff globally) in January 2019

**People**

• Computer scientist **Dr Subhash Kak**, ISRO scientist (who was wrongly punished accused of terrorist link) Dr **Nambi Narayan**, Cisco Chairman **John Chambers**, AdobeCEO **Santanu Narain** and L&T Chairman **AM Naik** are part of Padma awards 2019
• **Vinod Kumar Yadav** is the new **Railway Board Chairman** (effective January 1, 2019), heading the organization with nearly 1.5 Million staff
• **Intel** names Interim CEO **Bob Swan** as **permanent CEO** on January 31, 2019

**Start-up Scene**

• **MilkBasket** starts Bangalore operations on January 15, 2019
• **Byju’s**, Bangalore-based learning solutions company acquires US-based learning games company **Osmo** for $ 120 million on January 16, 2019
• Bangalore-based analytics firm **Fractal** gets $ 200 Million capital infusion from **Apax** on January 16, 2019
• **Bain Capital** acquires majority stake in **Brillio** (Bangalore-based and Santa Clara headquartered) analytics / digital company on January 15, 2019
• Online car trading start-up **CarDekho** raises $ 110 Million on January 3, 2019
Interesting Application & Apps

- Finance Ministry’s “ITR Filing 2.0” order of Rs 4,241 Crores goes to Infosys on January 16, 2019
- Finance Ministry starts an interesting Budget Series on Twitter (January 15 to February 1)

Interesting numbers

- RIL posts Rs 10,251 Crores profit for October – December 2018 quarter, the first private enterprise to cross Rs 10,000 quarterly profit; for the same period, TCS posts Rs. 8,105 Crores profit, the highest ever
- ModiCare (Aayushman Bharat) treats 6.85,000 patients free of cost in the first 100 days

General

- Tata brand reaches the global Top 100 (the only entry from India) in January 2019
- UK Prime Minister loses “Brexit poll” but narrowly wins “confidence vote” in January 2019
- JLL Survey puts Bangalore as No 1 in the list of “Most Dynamic Cities” (2019 Edition of City Momentum)
- GST doubled the exemption limits for MSME’s (from Rs 20 Lakhs to Rs 40 Lakhs per year) on January 10, 2019
- Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj (erstwhile Allahabad) starts at 4 AM on January 15, 2019, 150 million visitors expected over 2 months (Jan 15 (Sankranti) to March 6 (Maha Shivratri)); 800 special trains, 50,000-strong security force, 220 KM of road, thousands of doctors, hundreds of tents, 4000 Wi-Fi hotspots and 1,20,000 toilets Kumbh Mela 2019 is spectacular in every respect
- US Government shut-down that started on December 22, 2018 continued for the longest time till January 25, 2019
- CES 2019 (January 8 – 11, 2019) at Las Vegas show-cased many exciting products; however, most of them including LG foldable TV’s were incremental, rather than breakthrough innovations
- 620 Km long human chain from Kasrgod to Thiruvananthapuram with 3.5 Million participants create history in Kerala on January 1, 2019
- Government introduces Constitutional Amendment (103 Amendment 2019) “quota for economically backward people” on January 9, 2019; it is passed in both the Houses (Parliament & Rajya Sabha) and with Presidential nod on January 12, 2019 becomes a law, one of the fastest legislation in Indian Parliamentary history
- CBI Chief Alok Varma is reinstated and transferred; but, he decides to retire; all within days, unfortunate developments for the country

About the author: Professor Sowmyanarayanan Sadagopan (ss@iiitb.ac.in) is the Director of IIIT-Bangalore. These are his personal views. He has been writing on “What’s Hot in IT” from an Indian perspective continuously from 1997; Times of India, Financial Express, IT Magazine carried the monthly (and yearly columns) till 2016; IEEE India has been carrying the quarterly columns since 2017